

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

CPN Electronics

Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership

CPN Electronics Sets Higher Standards with ISO 9001-2000

Client Profile:

CPN Electronics (CPN) has been distributing electronic connectors and electrical components from their facility in Sunrise, Florida, since 1990. Specializing in military connectors and related components, the woman-owned company prides itself on exemplary customer service, as indicated by their slogan, "Real-People supplying Real Service." CPN has over 100 years of combined connector experience and currently employs 34 people.

Situation:

As CPN grew, it became evident that the company have some sort of corrective action and process controls in place. They decided to become ISO certified. ISO is a management system that touches on all the departments of a business and their interaction with each other and with the related materials that pass between departments. The only things that are not regulated by ISO are accounting systems since there are so many and they differ in every country. Military standards are focused primarily on quality, and the military now requires ISO certification for their suppliers because it represents a much more comprehensive and universal set of standards.

CPN was dealing with military standards on a fairly regular basis; therefore, earning ISO certification would make the rigorous inspections and paperwork for the MIL-I-45208 Military Standard that much easier to prepare for. In addition, the benefit of having all their processes and procedures documented would pave the way for doing business with new clients who require ISO certification. Forty percent of CPN's customers required them to be either ISO 9001 certified, in the process of attaining ISO 9001 certification, or completion of a quality survey to ensure their quality system has the components of an ISO 9001 registered company. At least two of their customers were waiting for the company to be ISO certified before doing business with them. Wilhelm Barb, project manager with the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (FMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, had assisted CPN's sister company, Benchmark Electronics, with their ISO process. Benchmark suggested that CPN contact Wilhelm to help them as well.

Solution:

FMEP began working with small teams made up of Ed Coughlin, CPN's Director of Quality, a representative from each department or process, and a member of CPN management. The teams assessed each process, wrote out the procedures and assisted in the implementation. They went one by one through CPN's business procedures, from sales to shipping, and documented these according to ISO standard. During the process, Wilhelm used a computer template which took them thru a series of questions. CPN answered the questions that pertained to their business and Wilhelm was able to help them personalize the output to meet their specific needs. In the end they had produced documentation that was customized to their processes and procedures and in the format that could withstand ISO audit. According to Ed Coughlin, Wilhelm was especially helpful in explaining all the confusing terminology and helping the teams understand the "what" and "why" of each step. Once

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each section was documented and approved by CPN management, anyone who was involved in each process was trained so that they could start using the newly developed procedures and forms. All CPN employees received training. In total, the project took about 18 months. Wilhelm also provided Internal Auditor training so that CPN would have auditors on staff to make sure the procedures were being followed and forms were being used. When the ISO registrar came to do their audit, CPN passed without a problem.

CPN's ISO program allows the company to monitor and measure their processes. They established company objectives and monitored these along with many other processes to get specific feedback daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly which helped them fine tune areas of their business and make improvements. In sales, CPN had had problems with too many returns. Through Sales Process Improvement that number was cut substantially when they determined that they should add a step to check the sales order before orders were picked. RMA's (Returned Material Authorizations) decreased and customer satisfaction improved. With the knowledge they gained thru ISO training, CPN has also been able to assist their suppliers in improving product quality which again meant more satisfied customers. Being ISO certified not only means that CPN will continue to be able to satisfy the requirements of their military customers but also of many other potential clients both nationally and worldwide. CPN Electronics also requires their suppliers to either annually submit proof of ISO certification, or submit a supplier quality survey, to determine if the suppliers' quality system is acceptable. If accepted the supplier becomes an approved source of supply for CPN.

Any good business always reacts and changes. With the ISO system in place CPN is prompted to think of things differently than they did before going thru the process. The thought processes are more complete and they look at the big picture now. Inspections for the military and for their ISO audits have been a breeze. While CPN was waiting to see if they had achieved their ISO certification, the Navy did an inspection and walk thru and came away very impressed. They actually copied some of CPN's documents to use as examples for other companies. The whole experience was very helpful in creating a good mind set at CPN. The process has made everyone begin to think like they should be thinking, about impacts on their clients, about running the business and how each relates to the other.

Results:

- * Achieved ISO 9001-2000 certification.
- * Established Quality Management System.
- * Reduced RMA's.
- * Improved customer satisfaction.

Testimonial:

"Our company contracted with Florida MEP to assist us in establishing and implementing a quality system compliant to the ISO 9001:2000 standard. The ultimate goal was for our company to become ISO 9001:2000 certified. Florida MEP provided Mr. Wilhelm Barb, who had the difficult task of understanding the operation of our company. His thorough understanding of the ISO standard and of our operating system helped us establish new procedures, forms, objectives, and goals. Wilhelm displayed enthusiasm, patience, and knowledge as he helped us establish our quality management system. We became an ISO certified company during the summer of 2005. Due to the professionalism and dedication displayed by Florida MEP and particularly by Mr. Wilhelm Barb, we have since referred five other corporations to MEP for assistance in establishing their quality systems."

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Ed Coughlin, Director of Quality